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ABSTRACT

The race between Mary Decker and Zola Budd, a head to head confrontation in the 1985 Olympic Games, is examined within the broader context of the transformation taking place in sports as a result of the combined efforts of television and the economic forces of sponsorship. Athletics is going through this process of transformation both economically and culturally, with a complex connection between the two levels. Athletics has always had a star system, undercover payments, and promoters anxious to organize head-to-head clashes to attract crowds. Now the television audience has to be attracted with a form of entertainment different from live spectator entertainment. The matchmaking role, which has become crucial between the economic and cultural levels, is linked most closely to the emergence of stars and the establishment around them of rivalries, dramas, and narratives. More promoters and more sponsors will continue to pressure the small number of global stars available as television continues the attempt to reproduce audience-attracting uncertainty, while ensuring a high and consistent quality of entertainment. The athletic authorities will continue the struggle to manage the free market forces they have unleashed, and more head-to-head confrontations will have to happen. A glossary is appended. (62 notes and references) (CGD)

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THE HEAD TO HEAD THAT HAD TO HAPPEN: A CASE STUDY OF TELEVISION SPORT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Garry Whannel

Paper presented to the 1986 International Television Studies Conference.

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THE HEAD TO HEAD THAT HAD TO HAPPEN: A CASE STUDY OF TELEVISION SPORT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

"In effect Budd and Slaney were not so much paid for a race, as to make a television appearance." (Guardian 1st Nov 85)

Athletics has "integrity and a clean and healthy image. Athletics is all about winning." John Russell, marketing director of Peugeot Talbot

One of the major events of the 1985 athletics season was the confrontation between Mary Decker and Zola Budd, described by ITV presenter Jim Rosenthal as "the head to head that had to happen." This paper examines the presentation of the race in the broader context of the transformations taking place in sport as a result of the combined effects of television and sponsorship. (1)

The head to head had to happen, in a sense as a result of an unresolved narrative tension. Mary Decker went to the LA Olympics with an outstanding record, but never having won an Olympic medal, partly as a result of the USA boycott of Moscow. Zola Budd, a highly talented athlete from South Africa went to LA shrouded in the controversy produced by her obtaining British citizenship in world record time, using it is a flag of convenience in order to dodge the boycott of South African sport. The two collided in the

3000 metres final and Mary Decker fell. Budd ran on to finish seventh. Endless television repetition of the incident and extensive post mortem debate in the media completely obscured the result of the race, won by Maricica Puica of Roumania, with Britain's Wendy Sly gaining the silver medal.

Meanwhile major changes were occurring in British television athletics. ITV had won the contract from the BBC, and athletics appointed an agency who were to dramatically increase their sponsorship income. ITV were no doubt keen to make an impact in their first year, while American television sought to bring their audience the triumph that Mary Decker's fall had deprived them of. Eventually the race was slotted into one of the highlights of the 1985 British athletics calendar, the Peugeot-Talbot Games, at Crystal Palace. This meeting, already arranged, as usual for a friday night, had to be extended to a second night, allowing the Decker-Budd race to be screened live in ABC's ~~Wide~~ Wide World of Sports .(2)

The event did not meet with universal acclaim. RUNNING called the Decker/Budd race "a crashing bore" and commented "...the quality of the athletics often seemed to be in inverse proportion to the amount of public relations and media hype...treating athletes as prize fighters in opposite corners - complete with comparisions of their bodyweight -

cheapens the sport and will make many rue the departure oof the BBC from the domestic scene." (3) In the Guardian, John Rodda wrote that the second day decision, taken after two thirds of tickets were already sold for the friday, looked like sharp practice and had attracted the attention of the Advertising Standards Authority and the Office of Fair Trading. (4) Further controversy was generated by the absence from the race of Olympic champion, Maricica Puica, who was keen to run but, it is believed, was offered only a derisory £2,000, as compared to £90,000 for Budd and £54,000 for Decker.

The meeting was organised by the Southern Counties AAA who are probably the largest and wealthiest of the regional athletic associations. (It should be remembered that until very recently, athletics has been a fairly impoverished sport) In 1984 they had an operating surplus of nearly 6 figures to which the Peugeot-Talbot Games contributed over £38,000. (5) For 1985, Thames TV International handled the overseas sales of the broadcasting of this meeting on behalf of ITV. American network ABC alone are believed to have paid £180,000 for the Peugeot-Talbot Games. Out of this revenue, Decker and Budd were paid (£90,000 and £54,000) and the SCAA Peugeot Talbot Games are said to have made a profit of around £100,000. The SCAAA spends much of its revenue on supporting coaching schemes.

Clearly there are both economic and cultural transformations at work here, and I want to offer some notes on four aspects: the transformation of sport over the last twenty years by television and sponsorship, and the specific ways these pressures have acted upon athletics; the nature of television conventions of sport coverage, with specific relation to the Decker/Budd race; the economic transformations produced by the ITV deal, and resultant contradictory tensions within the world of athletics; and finally the cultural-ideological field of which Decker/Budd might be said to be a part.

A) SPORT, TELEVISION AND SPONSORSHIP

The fifties and sixties were a period of crisis for traditional forms of sport organisation, a crisis which in Britain revolved around financial pressures, administrative control, and concepts of the amateur and the professional. (6) The traditional amateur benevolent paternalism of sport organisation came under pressure from entrepreneurial interests as the contradiction between sports financially deprived organisations and its commercial potential widened.

The income for sport organisations came from a variety of sources, principally gate revenue, membership fees, grants, television fees and a fairly low level of sponsorship. But the expansion of television, the increase in sport coverage

and the growth of an international market in television sport were making television coverage a major factor in sport economics.

It was not simply that television fees opened up a new source of revenue, but rather that television also served as a great attraction to sponsors. The attraction was considerably heightened from 1965 when television advertising of cigarettes was banned. Consequently major tobacco firms, such as John Player, Benson and Hedges and Marlboro chose to plough large sums into televised sport. (7)

A sponsorship explosion begun in the mid 1960s and has not yet abated. It has transformed the face of British sport. Sports are increasingly prone to ensure that they meet the requirements of television by providing events in the form that television finds attractive. Minor sports unable to get television coverage have gone through extensive contortions in attempts to appeal to television. In short television's own definitions as to what constitutes good television sport have come to be of great influence in the world of sport itself.

While sport has always been a form of entertainment, certainly since the growth of spectator sport in the 19th century it has always been a very particular form of

entertainment. (8) Based on uncertainty both of outcome and of quality of performance it therefore does not offer the same guarantee of quality as a theatrical or variety performance. It can be argued that traditionally spectators have accepted that some matches will be good and some dull.

One of the characteristics of any form of capitalist entrepreneurship and rationalised production is the attempt to reduce the uncertainty of the commodity.
The increased penetration of sport by capital and resultant infusion of spectacular, internationalised and glamourised forms of entertainment can be seen as an attempt to reduce the uncertainty of the sporting commodity, at least as far as its entertainment value is concerned. Hence televisions tendency to try and ensure that even if the event is dull, by judicious highlights, action replays, interviews etc the programme itself can be entertaining. (9)

Television values liveness and immediacy. Certain major spectacular occasions - general elections, the moon landings, Royal Weddings, and Olympic Games - enable television to come into its own, in that it can offer an immediacy not possible in the press or the cinema. One of the most remarkable moments of television came in 1980 when the climax of one live event (the Embassy World Snooker) had to be interrupted for the "live" , though actually recorded moments earlier, climax of another (the Embassy Siege).

Both events were later nominated for BAFTA Awards in the actuality category. (Faced with the choice between Embassy siege and Embassy snooker, one cartoonist commented "these tobacco companies will sponsor anything".) Even where events are not actually transmitted live, attempts are often made to preserve the feel of immediacy, as in recorded highlights of sport events. Indeed the current conventional wisdom in sports departments is back towards a greater emphasis on liveness - hence the scrapping of World of Sport, with its use of pre-packaged and bought-in sports, in favour of regular live material.

Television also makes extensive use of stories, as can be seen in the range of popular fiction it produces in the forms of soap opera, situation comedy, crime series and so on. But it is not only in fiction that the story is important - news, current affairs and documentaries also relate events to us in the form of stories, and journalists characteristically refer to "the real story", "the inside story", or "the full story".

These stories provide two elements of value to television. First, they provide a means of winning and holding an audience. They give us a way in, a point of identification, a desire to know what happens next, and how it all turns out. Second they provide beginnings and endings. A story opens by posing a question, and the promise is that by the

end the answer will be revealed. This is equally true whether the question is how the miners strike will turn out, who will be the new landlord at the Rovers Return, or the chances of Sebastian Coe against Steve Ovett in the 1500m. (10)

If television is looking for two apparently contradictory elements, stories and narratives; and liveness and immediacy; sport does much to offer both. Sport events take place in the real world, their outcome is uncertain, and thus they offer immediacy. But all sport events implicitly pose the question "who will win" and offer the promise that by the end the answer will be known, and so they also offer a narrative structure. Sport then offers a range of potentially attractive material for television.

Television of course does more than simply reflect these stories to us, it selects particular themes and particular episodes to highlight. Coe v Ovett, Decker v Budd, both became over-arching stories around which coverage was focussed. These stories help to win and hold viewer attention, and would seem to be a major source of pleasure. Part of the pleasure of any narrative lies in the uncertainty.

But whereas in drama it is only the viewer who is in the dark, in sport coverage the result is in genuine doubt -

producer, camera crew, and commentator have no more idea than the viewer of the final outcome. Uncertainty would seem to be an important part of the appeal. The outcome of a drama can often be anticipated through knowledge of conventions (good guy wins/gets girl etc) But in sport, even though we may be led to identify with the good guy there is no guarantee that the plot will turn out that way.

Obviously for the production team this uncertainty exists only during live coverage. Edited highlights can be assembled in full knowledge of the final outcome. But while edited highlights do recontruct the coverage in the light of the eventual result, the uncertainty for the viewer remains,and the retention of the original commentary does preserves a level of uncertainty in the coverage itself. It could be said that there is a degree of tension between the liveness, and the desire to narrativise, to draw out the stories, and make them strong points of appeal.

Clearly a lot of importance is attached to the need of the audience not to know the result in advance. Recorded highlights are generally constructed in chronological order with no hints given as to the outcome. People go to great lengths to avoid hearing the result - a phenomenon recognised in the news practice of showing the result of a football match about to be shown, in vision only, first inviting viewers to avert their eyes.

This also provides a problem for the practices of production. The distinctive framing of events, the focussing of audience attention on particular stories can be undercut by the progress of events themselves. ITV began 1985 with an intention to showcase the womens javelin, and the rivalry between Tessa Sanderson and Fatima Whitbread, but Sanderson's lack of form, along with the inherent problems of rendering a javelin competition in sufficiently dramatic televisual form, meant that this theme never became a major element of their athletic coverage.

By contrast, the Decker/Budd "confrontation" was so strongly foregrounded as to competely dominate the coverage of the second night of the Peugeot-Talbot Games. In the fifty six minutes of transmission time from start to finish of the programme, material directly relating to Decker and Budd took up almost 33 minutes, including the race, which was just 8minutes 32 seconds. Of 15 events in the stadium, only 6 were televised at all. The six events shown to TV viewers included the last 2 laps only of a mens 3000 metres, and two very brief excerpts from field events. Only two of the 8 womens events were screened. Two very distinct selections are at work here. First, the womens 3000 metres is foregrounded as the only event of any real significance, and secondly Decker and Budd are the only competitors of key importance. Very little time is spent giving any

information about the other runners, two of whom finished ahead of Zola Budd. Interestingly, the normal graphic format for results, showing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, had to be ammended for the post-race result, in order to include Zola Budd in fourth place.

B) TELEVISING ATHLETICS

The current relative affluence of athletics is due in part to the international success and popularity of athletes like Coe and Ovett, but also to the attempts of ITV from the early seventies onwards to challenge the dominance of BBC in sport coverage. Athletics came through a period of crisis in the 1960s and began building towards its current prominence during the 70s. Staff cutbacks and other stringent economies had pulled the AAA through its financial crisis, a move from the White City to Crystal Palace gave the sport a more modern up to date appearance, and new stars, in particular David Bedford, began to catch the imagination. (11)

By 1972 the AAA was solvent and had found a new sponsor in Nationwide who were to support the AAA championships for the next ten years. The move to Crystal Palace provided athletics with a new growing audience. Athletics was becoming increasingly international as the development of more televised events and increased under the counter money for the top 'amateurs' spawned a travelling athletic circus. With the emergence of a series of world class performers Britain was particularly well placed to take advantage of this international growth.

More than any other single factor, it was the emergence of Coe and Ovett and the rivalry between them, from 1979 onwards, that helped to transform British athletics. Their much publicised rivalry has made athletics into a major television sport, contributing to the competitive bidding in 1984 which resulted in ITVs capture of the exclusive contract and a substantial increase in television revenue

Athletics was at last beginning its slow move to open professionalism. Undercover payments to top athletes had been an accepted, although secret part of the sport for a long time. But the challenge of Packer to the cricket authorities had alerted the athletics world to the danger of an outside entrepreneur establishing a rival professional branch of the sport. (although several previous attempts had foundered)

In Dec 81 the IAAF proposed a scheme for permit meetings, in which promoters could pay appearance money to particular athletes. The money could not go to the athlete but was held in a trust fund, administered by the national association, and could be used to provide the athlete with expenses. The fund would go to the athlete on retirement. Similarly, it became possible for athletes to advertise, providing the fee went into a trust fund.

By the end of the 70s it was clear that athletics had a lot to offer as a television sport. As the premier Olympic sport it received unique attention every four years. The success of top British stars like Seb Coe, Steve Ovett, Daley Thompson, Fatima Whitbread and Tessa Sanderson made it possible to provide the audience with a point of identification around national interest. As a mixed sport, with a mixed gender following it fitted neatly into a strategy aimed at the "family audience". And as a sport with multiple events it offered a wide range of potential stories.

British athletics had been televised by BBC from the 1940s until 1985. Coverage in the early days was infrequent, but the public interest generated by BBC film of Roger Bannister's sub-four minute mile World Record in 1954 and television coverage of a dramatic race between Russian Vladimir Kutz and Chris Chataway were the beginnings of

athletics as a popular television sport. (12) Even in those days there were interesting conflicts of interest. In the fifties the two men charged with negotiating a television deal on behalf of the BAAB were Jack Crump and Harold Abrahams. Both also had contracts to commentate on athletics for the BBC. During the sixties BBC sport coverage attained high professsional and technical standards. David Coleman, Grandstand presenter since 1958, emerged as a commentator who became the voice of athletics for the televison audience at the 1960 Rome Olympics. British success at Tokyo in 1964 , the growth of satellite coverage and the introduction of colour from 1968 were all boosting the popularity of television sport generally. (13) BBC still had a dominant position in sport but after the 1967 franchise re-allocation had created LWT (a company with a major stake in sports coverage, ITV began to attempt to challenge this dominance, but it was another seventeen years before they won the exclusive athletics contract.

In 1972 John Bromley failed to convince the BAAB that ITV would give athletics adequate coverage, and BBC kept the rights. In 1976 the BBC was able to renew its contract for another four years at a cost of just over £250,00, and in 1980 BBC renewed its athletics contract for another four years, at a cost of almost £2million. It was bidding from ITV that helped to force the price up to eight times the

1976 level. BBCs first bid was £1.2million, ITV bid £1.5million just before the Moscow Olympics, and the BBC clinched the deal by offering £60,000 cash up front to get the BAAB out of a cashflow problem. (14)

The Board felt unconvinced that ITV could give athletics adequate coverage and declined an ITV suggestion to just sign a two year contract with BBC pending the arrival of Channel Four. Alan Hart of the BBC commented "Our past record of televised athletics and the high standards of production and commentary were significant factors in the negotiations. We are now very sophisticated in our production and with more portable equipment available we will not be standing still in this area. The last thing we want is to interfere with the sport but I am sure we can do more to project field events in a way that has not been possible before. "(15) One influence on the Boards attitude to ITV may have been the fate of gymnastics since Thames won the contract at the start of 1979. It was widely felt that the quantity of the coverage was inferior, although Thames refuted this. (16)

On 29th May 1984 ITV offered £8million for exclusive rights to televise British athletics for 5 years. Within the BAAB the AAA were holding out for £10million. There were also worries about ITV's commitment to sport, which must have been greatly heightened by ITV's withdrawal from Olympic

coverage. Not all ITCA heads were enthusiastic about sport. Paul Fox of Yorkshire was known to have been unhappy about the Helsinki World Championships when BBCs coverage got a much bigger audience than ITVs. One BAAB fear was that IAC Cross country, WAAA Championships and mens area championships would get inadequate coverage. Loyalty to BBC was also a factor.

BBC raised their bid to £9million, Brian Cowgill of Thames was brought into the negotiations and ITVs new bid of £10.5million seemed likely to win the day. Nigel Cooper BAAB Sec commented that "It does look as though the sport could have money pouring out of its ears"

Changes in IBA regulations meant that in future, sponsors would for the first time be allowed to advertise before, during and after coverage of events they were sponsoring. Mark McCormack's International Management Group were reported to have offered to find £4.5million in sponsorship if the deal went to ITV. It may be that this was one of the key factors in the decision to accept the ITV offer.

When the deal with ITV was finalised, LWT head of sport, John Bromley called it " the biggest boost for morale in the history of ITV sport", and said that the BBC were a hard act to follow. The contract runs for five years from 1985. A special unit was established to cover the sport, under

Producer Richard Russell, who commented, " we believe that there is a lot more to coverage that the rather formal approach of the BBC, which is basically aimed at giving you exactly the same view as if you had the best seat at Crystal Palace." (17)

C) ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CONTRADICTIONS

With the television deal finalised, the BAAB began to look for an agent to handle the sponsorship deals. Contenders included IMG (Mark McCormack) Keith Prowse, West Nally, and Alan Pascoe. John Bromley warned the BAAB not to sign anything concerning sponsorship without making sure that ITV could deliver (18)

To the surprise of many, the contract went to Alan Pascoe whose APA Organisation won the right to sell athletics events to sponsors. There were 19 televised events and a typical APA package provided a sponsor, for an agreed fee, with a number of titled televised meetings (usually three) and board ads at all the meetings. Neither athletics authorities nor sponsors adjusted with total ease to the new arrangements. After negotiations to use Pascoe were underway, the BAAB went ahead and signed a deal with HFC for the UK Championships for £35,000 per year, which Rodda argued was about one third of Pascoes Pearl Assurance deal. (19)

On 18 Dec U-Bix announced that they were to pull out of athletics sponsorship. They expressed concern that ITVs coverage might not be national, and that their rivals could take ads in the middle of events that they were sponsoring. However by 29 Jan 85 it was revealed that Kodak sponsorship would replace U-Bix. Kodak took over the AAA Championships and will sponsor this, an international and some road races. They will pay £1million over five years. Deals with Kodak, Pearl and Peugot-Talbot mean that Pascoe has already reached his commitment to provide £600,000 per year. He commented that "There are still events available and my phone is hardly ever silent, but we are asking for a lot of money to project athletics in its new image." (20) and that "Sports sponsorship is no longer a somewhat naive jab at name improvement or prestige getting. It is a very sophisticated marketing tool. You are aiming directly at potential customers and wholesalers. Sponsorship becomes an event in itself, with meetings, incentive promotions, point of sale stands and so on all at one specific time and place" (21) Total sports sponsorship, now worth £112 million in this country, is greater than the combined radio and cinema advertising. (22)

In order to organise the major events, and liase between athletics, television, and APA, a British Athletics Promotion Unit was established. Andy Norman, an

ex-policeman who had become a key figure in British athletics was appointed as Promotions Officer, responsible to the Chairs of BAAB and AAA, working on a day to day basis with Doug Goodman, the chair of the British Athletics Promotion Unit.

Athletics gained an income from TV and sponsorship in 1985 of well over £3 million, £2.1million from television fees and around £1.5 million from sponsorships. (23) From this the BAPU will pay over £350,000 in subventions to athletes. Reckoning their share at a conservative 20 % APA will have made over £300,000. (24)

INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR ATHLETICS

The increased importance of television and sponsorship has also transformed international athletics. In the last few years the IAAF has established a link with ISL, an offshoot of Addidas, who also have links with the World Cup and the Olympics. They have introduced many new competitions: the World Championships, the Marathon World Cup, World Junior Championships, and the IAAF Grand Prix Scheme, intended to bring together many invitation events in a coherent series that could popularise the sport to a wider audience and bring in TV and sponsorship revenue. The Grand Prix scheme is a contradictory system. It attempts a form of capitalist rationalisation aimed at a more efficient expolitation of

the popularity of athletics, but also attempts to regulate and control the free market of European invitation meetings. (25) The IAAF are to receive $4.5 mill from a 3 year contract with NBC to cover all IAAF events except the World Cup in Canberra, which is being televised by ABC. The package begins with the World Games in Paris (Jan 85) and includes the next World Championships in Rome. (26) Meanwhile Ted Turner's cable network have been getting in on the act by trying to establish a Goodwill Games as an alternative Olympics. (27)

INFLATION

One result of the increased rate of penetration of sporting organisation by capital has been a form of inflation, already seen in dramatic form in tennis. More money from television and sponsors produces more events, but the number of top stars remains limited, as Cliff Temple has argued, "the problem is that there are now too many meetings, egged on by sponsors and TV pursuing too few genuinely crowd-pulling athletes." (28) In the first year of the ITV contract athletics spent around £400,000 on payments to athletes and "long serving and honourable honorary officials suddenly found themselves at the helm of a multi-million pound industry" (29) The growth in the forces of entrepreneurship meant that the traditional

control of such officials was challenged by the rising power of the meeting promoters, who had the responsibility of delivering star-packed meetings to television. Andreas Brugger spent around £320,000 on one meeting in Zurich, and David Bedford says that the IAC meeting costs around £140,000 to promote. (30) Athlete Jack Buckner has argued that the money is distributed very unevenly. "Money in athletics does not go very deep. The majority is taken by the superstars at each event and everyone else fights for the crumbs....The promoter of Helsinki or Stockholm or Nice wants to sell his tickets so he spends his money on half a dozen names and then - the rest....this system is maintained by the media whose coverage further emphasises the domination of a few superstars. " (31) Buckner points to three attempts to introduce a fairer system of paymehts:

A) IAAF GRAND PRIX: at least has the virtue of encouraging prize money.

B) British Athletics Promotion Unit: which at least attempts to spread the money a bit more equitably

C) International Athletes Club: which paid a minimum £100 to all competitors in their Aug 2 Grand Prix meeting.

These three can all be seen as ad hoc ways in which the athletic organisations have attempted , with mixed success, to manage the dynamic market forces currently transforming the sport. RUNNING magazine has also advocated a greater

use of prize money rather than appearance money. But the Grand Prix system has found it difficult competing with the free market in the rest of athletics. Over 20% of Grand Prix races had to be declared void because there weren't sufficient athletes from the top 50 rankings (32) Only 6 of the 16 Grand Prix meetings were able to stage the required number (12) of point scoring events. (33)

INTERNATIONAL ATHLETES CLUB

The new economic forces working upon athletics have not eased tensions between the various organisations. The traditional role of sport organisations in fostering a broad base has been in conflict with the new entrepreneurial pressure to produce quality at the elite level. The International Athletes Club has been one focus of contradictory tensions. As a form of trade union for elite athletes it nevertheless has aspirations to improve the position of the grassroots. At the same time, as promoter of its own events it has had also to manoeuvre, with mixed success through the cluttered field of sponsors, advertisers, brokers and television producers. After originally opposing the IMG bid, it then did a spectacular U turn, remaining aloof from the BAAB deal with APA and choosing instead to work with IMG itself. They managed to lose the longest standing sponsorship in athletics, Coke pulling out of their 17 year involvement in the IAC meeting,

because of an unwillingness to share the limelight with GP sponsors Mobil. The partnership with IMG failed to bear fruit and in the great sponsorship race, IAC were left on the starting blocks, still hunting for a sponsor, while all around them the revenue flowed into athletics. (34) Their appointment of IMG client Seb Coe as an international advisor also brought criticism. His role could include negotiating for appearance of athletes abroad - a role that agents like IMG are not permitted. (35)

Later in the year a group including Dave Bedford and Mike Winch forced an election for the SCAAA General Committee - the first in 18 years. The SCAAA runs the Peugeot Talbot games, and elects 7 members onto AAA General Committee. (36) Ironically, this IAC bid for greater power in the SCAAA came rather late. In June Winch and Bedford got elected onto SCAAA committee, joining Derek Johnson , and their grouping also included Roger Simons, leading light in the British Athletics League, and Stuart Storey. But power had shifted, BAPU taking effective control of the Peugeot-Talbot Games away from SCAAA, who could not even see the documents. " Indeed by early November, SCAAA officials were not even formally aware of the amount earned by their meeting in sponsorship" (37)

The Peugeot Talbot games are still run by the Southern Counties AAA, who started it as the Debenham Games in 1970s

to raise coaching money. But they are clearly losing effective control to BAPU. It has become the major meeting of the British season, and the IAAF say that from 1987 a single city can only host one GP. So BAPU may want to move it to Birmingham. SCAAA not happy at this or at running of 1985 event and have formed a sub-committee to oversee the event in 1986. (38)

The IAC began a campaign to change the AAA constitution to allow 15 members of the general committee to be directly elected at the AGM. They alleged that APA charged insufficient for ad boards, and took too much in commission, taking a % from both parties to the deals. From the Minolta Copiers contract of £130,000 APA charge the company £30,000 and then charge BAPU £25,000 (39) RUNNING (40) also reported that of £80,000 per year paid by Nike, APA takes £25,000. The contract with Peugeot Talbot is publicised as worth £250,000 to athletics. APA take £90,000 as a service contract from PT, then deduct £44,000 from the remaining £160,000 as an agency fee from athletics, leaving £116,000 to pay for the Westminster Mile, and indoor meeting, and the domestic highlight, the PT games. APA say the service contract covers many expenditures on behalf of the sponsor. (41. RUNNING May 86 p49)

In November Mike Winch lost a court action to allow him as a member of the General Committee of the AAA to reveal

details of the financial arrangements to his club and others. (42) RUNNING commented that "the AAA has now established a precedent for not being accountable to any of its constituent members" (43)

WOMENS AMATEUR ATHLETICS

Womens athletics has always been faced with a tension around the decision to retain a separate body, with consequent marginality,rather than be absorbed completely into the AAA or the BAAB, and so lose control of womens events. The complex and loose federation of athletics organisations have produced fixture clashes. The second day of the WAAA Championships in Birmingham (sponsor TSB) clashed with the Oslo GP, making it hard for women athletes to obtain permission to go to Oslo. The WAAA meeting is part of ITV deal and the WAAA gets £100,000 of the TV money for the championships and one international. John Rodda points out that for that money, ITV expect a much higher level of competition that has been the case in recent seasons at the womens championships. Marea Hartmann of the WAAA says that invitiations have been sent to 7 countries but none of the money would be used as participation fees through trust funds. Rodda says sponsors can buy into WAAA events at a much lower rate than other sponsors are paying (in other words they are undercutting APA. (44) In 1986 The WAAA refused to pre-select anyone for the Commonwealth Games and

said good performances at WAAA championships were the only way to obtain selection. This was a way of forcing a good line up (45)

Meanwhile the Scottish WAAA managed to negotiate a sponsor deal involving vest ads, only for WAAA over-rule them and bar it. Womens athletics is caught in a classic double-bind. Agreeing to unity and hence absorbtion within pone single mixed giverning body would mean a loss of control and autonomy. But remaining independent has brought them marginality and impoverishment, an impoverishment exacerbated by the apparent desire of the WAAA leadership to protect women athletes from contamination by commerce.

The BAAB and the AAA are also stumbling over the hurdles of sponsorship management, weaving an erratic path. They considered and ultimately rejected a £200,000 offer from British Nuclear Fuels (46) and in the light of recent events in USSR, are no doubt heartily glad they did so. They barred an agreed deal between Haringey and the Health Education Council, featuring the slogan "Be a Pacesetter - Don't Smoke" (47) But, subject to IAAF approval, they have agreed to allow vest ads - but only in road races, leagues and open competition, not allowed in AAA championships or TV events - a move that will bring revenue at club level. (48) Here as elsewhere, a patrician disdain for commerce is locked into a tug-of-war with the entrepreneurial invasion.

D) DECKER/BUDD IN THE CULTURAL ARENA

Culturally of course, the Decker/Budd race did not take place in a vacuum, but is best understood as part of a whole field of sporting representations. While there is not space to sketch out this field in any detail, five elements seem to me to be of particular relevance. These are the re-assertion of competitive individualism, the growth of fitness chic, the concept of a "family sport", the tensions between blackness and Britishness, and the crises inherent in attempts to "keep politics out of sport". (49)

The growth of top level sport, and the increase of financial returns, the rationalisation of coaching methods and the heightened importance of national success (driven by the East-West tensions of the Cold War) have tended to produce a strong work-ethic in sport - an emphasis on rigorous training and what Jean-Marie BROHM has called a "taylorisation of the body", an attempt to wring maximum productivity from the human frame. (50)

The individualism present as an element in sport is heightened by the entertainment contract, by the tendency to reward people as individuals, rather than as team members. The increasing financial returns available to top sport stars has made sport success seem like one more path to self

reliance, and self sufficiency, and provides a highly public form of success.

In the last twenty years fitness has become fashionable. A number of elements are articulated together in what has been termed "fitness chic". A new image of femininity has emerged as a challenge to old images of female frailty, and a challenge impossible without the critique of gender relations provided by the rise of the womens movement. But in a movement of recuperation, physical activity in women has become not merely permissible, but represented as desirable - sexual attractiveness has been articulated around fitness. (51) Sport is fashionable, so sport clothes are fashionable, and the fashion world increasingly borrows from the world of sport. It's fashionable to be fit - but even more important is to look fit - by wearing the right clothes. It's competitive - and its important , not simply to be fit, but to be more fit than others, as exemplified by the popularity of forms of fitness that really push the body - squash, and aerobics - the development from jogging and fun runs, to the marathon cult, the new emphasis on pain and "the burn". An ad for Olympus shoes promises, "we'll take you to hell and back". It is a new form of "Il faut soufrir pour etre belle" - "one has to suffer to be beautiful". As such, again it has links to Thatcherism and the need for national suffering to produce

national recovery - the medicine will not taste nice but it will be good for us.

What sense here to make of Decker and Budd ? Mary Decker's modes of self presentation would seem to represent a recuperation, a working over of the contradiction between systems of sport and femininity. Fit, succesful and determined, yet running in make-up, appearing with her athlete husband at press conferences, and being photographed in his arms. In this sense she contrasts with the gauche, self-consciousness and asexuality of Zola Budd's personna, all of which aids the themes of "young girl lost in a bewilidering world of politics" that the British media have laboured so hard to reproduce.

The portrayal of athletics as a family sport (Peugeot-Talbot's Sales Director compares the family atmosphere and picnics on the grass at Crystal Palace with the "family" of Peugeot-Talbot employees and dealers) echoes a common theme in sport, with an implicit contrast with football, seen as in crisis because it has "hooliganism" and is failing in its attempts to become a family sport. A close study of the ways in which the "family" motive is articulated leads one to suggest that it is a displaced form of class - by family sport is meant middle class sport.

The representation of athletics on television, like sport generally also works over the contradictions in British images of race. If one searches for positive images of black Britons being active and succesful, then sport cpoverage is one of the few places such a search might be succesful (52) (although of course there are then major questions as to the sense in which such images can be seen as "positive") Yet hierarchies are still at work in the complex process whereby sport stars become national heroes. Is Daley Thompson really feted in the same way as Seb Coe ? Could Norman Cowans ever be as prominent as Bob Willis ? Did Maurice Hope ever acheive the attention given to Alan Minter ? And, being both a woman and black, Tessa Sanderson has hardly become the major star that a white male Briton with a gold medal would undoubtedly have done. The establishment of Zola Budd as a potential popular hero has to be seen in the light of these questions.

Ironically, the apartheid issue and the collision with Mary Decker, by placing Zola Budd so centrally in the public eye, have merely served to dramatically increase her earning power. Early in 1985, Wendy Sly beat Zola Budd in USA. Wendy got £4,900, Budd £2,900, but according to American reports Budd was also offered £24,000 in appearance money, plus air fares. (53)

Wendy Sly commented, " She was and still is, the centre of attention and thats the way its going to stay. No matter how well I run that'll always be the way...I could safely say I could probably beat her ten times in a row and I'd still have to try out for the European team." She says she won't avoid Budd, but won't run against her again for one tenth of the money. (54)

The presentation of Zola Budd provides an interesting study in attempts to evacuate politics from discourse about sport. This is clearly, as ever an uneven and contradictory process, in which television preserves a much greater separation of sport and politics than does the press. Right at the start of 1985, one major national daily was already signalling a disillusioned note:

"Zola Budd has run one ring too many round Britain's citizenship laws, not to mention the goodwill of the British public. Her latest wishy-washy statement, promising to live in this country during the athletics season is little short of an insult." (55)

And the BAAB whose early commitment to Budd was enough to send their Secretary all the way to South Africa to plead with her not to turn her back on Britain were sharing this feeling in their insistence that she establish proper residential status. Budd herself agrees to be interviewed

only on the condition that politics not be raised, which sadly did not deter RUNNING from featuring a lengthy profile (56) and has refused every opportunity to make any statement disapproving of apartheid, a silence that can be open to only one interpretation.

The evacuation of politics reached a crisis in July when The Dairy Crest Games in Edinburgh were not transmitted because ITV Sports said signs placed in the arena by Edinburgh City Council, "Edinburgh against Apartheid" contravened IBA regulations against political advertising. The Edinburgh Council refused to remove them, and the transmission was cancelled. (57) · Dairy Crest expressed disapointment that the sport's clean healthy and uncontroversial image had "suffered quite markedly" The British Athletics Promotion Unit announced that they were willing to compensate Dairy Crest and income would not suffer as they had insured against any cancellation of TV coverage. (58) Councillor Alex Wood, Chair of the Labour Group said that he offered to remove the banner if a spot was offered in the C4 transmission to explain their case. This was refused. (59) The BBC say they would have made the same decision. (60)

E) TV AND TRANSFORMATION IN ATHLETICS

With Decker v Budd, ITV attempted to draw an audience with the pleasures of immediacy, narrative, confrontation, and

national identification, just as BBC before them had accomplished the same with Coe v Ovett. While this won for ITV an audience for the second evening of the Peugeot-Talbot Games of 11 million, during the rest of the season BBC's coverage of European meetings (not covered by the exclusive contract) regularly beat ITV in the audience race. For example, for the Bislett Games in Olso, BBC got 9.9m and ITV 6.9m. Only for the Golden Gala in Rome did ITV do better: 5.1m to BBCs 2.7m . (61) Whether this simply suggests an audience preference for BBC's coverage is questionable - dislike for ad breaks, and channel scheduling also have an effect on choice, but it is clear that athletics is currently more popular than ever as a television sport.

This paper suggests that athletics is going through a process of transformation both economically and culturally. The connection between these two levels is more complex. If, in Williams' sense, the process of determinations involves the setting of limits, and the exerting of pressures, it is quite clear that the economic forces produced by the combination of television and sponsorship do constitute a driving power upon these transformations, in setting limits and exerting pressures upon the processes whereby the athletics calendar is drawn up, the programme of

events for each meeting are established, and the competitors for each event are arranged.

Athletics has always had a star system, undercover payments, and promoters anxious to organise head to head clashes to attract crowds. But now it is not the crowd but the television audience that has to be attracted (note that while 11 million watched Decker and Budd on TV in Britain alone, Crystal Palace, sold out the previous night, was less than half full). This is a significant distinction: the television audience is different - athletics fans are only a small proportion of it; the conventions of television produce a form of entertainment distinctly different from the entertainment available to the live spectator. This is not to make a value judgement - both forms of entertainment can be judged in their own terms - it is merely to point out that the organising principle for top level athletics is now inevitably the need to provide television entertainment of consistent quality.

In this sense the matchmaking role has become crucial, and can be seen as a relay between economic and cultural levels, linked most closely around the emergence of stars, and the establishment around them of rivalries, dramas and narratives. As the focus of all the tensions and contradictions involved in the production of uncertainty of a consistent quality, Andy Norman's lot is not a happy one.

At the Peugeot-Talbot Games, Steve Cram, who broke the world record for the 1500 metres three days earlier in Nice, decided not to run against Coe. Coe, wanting a tough race then got transferred to the 800m on the morning of the race, to run against Cruz. On hearing this only one hour before the race, Cruz pulled out, and in punishment, Norman then got Cruz barred from his next three races. (62)

Incidents of this kind are likely to remain frequent as the inflation of athletics increases. More meetings, more promoters and more money in television revenue and sponsorship will continue to pursue the small number of global stars available, as television continues the attempt to reproduce audience-attracting uncertainty, while ensuring a high and consistent quality of entertainment. The athletics authorities, themselves torn between entrepreneurial zeal, and paternal benevolence will continue the struggle to manage the free-market forces that they have finally unleashed. More heads-to-heads will have to happen.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Mary Decker married British discus thrower Richard Slaney and is now often referred to as Mary Slaney - for the sake of clarity I have used Decker throughout.

2. A fifty minute programme, Take the Money and Run, about this race and the television coverage of athletics was broadcast on Channel Four on June 2nd 1986 as part of the series OPEN THE BOX, produced by Beat Ltd and the British Film Institute. I worked on the programme and this paper owes much to discussion, debate and argument during its production. I would like to thank Cary Bazalgette, Mike Dibb, Christine Geraghty and Michael Jackson.

3. RUNNING Sep 1985 p5)

4. Guardian 22/7/85)

5. RUNNING Aug 1985 p5)

6. I have discussed these issues at much greater length in The Unholy Alliance: Notes on Television and the Re-making of British Sport 1965-1985, (in LEISURE STUDIES, forthcoming) These six paragraphs precis the main points of that paper.

7. For a detailed discussion of sport sponsorship, see The Howell Report, Central Council of Physical Recreation,1983)

8. The majority of histories of sport focus on great games and great competitors and offer little in the way of social or cultural analysis. English Cricket, by Christopher

Brookes (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978) and The Peoples Game: The Social History of British Football, by James Walvin (Allen Lane 1975) are notable exceptions. For athletics, see The Official Centenary History of the Amateur Athletic Association, by Peter Lovesey (Guinness Superlatives 1979)

9. For examples of detailed textual analysis of sport coverage see Football on Television, edited by E. Buscombe (BFI 1975) and Television Coverage of Sport by Roy Peters, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Paper, 1976.

10. I have examined the television coverage of Coe and Ovett in Narrative and Television Sport: The Coe/Ovett Story, in Sporting Fictions, (Conference Proceedings published by CCCS and the Birmingham University Physical Education Department 1982)

11. see Lovesey, Op Cit

12.RUNNING April 1985 p82

13. A. Tomlinson and G. Whannel, Five Ring Circus: Money Power and Politics at The Olympic Games (Pluto 1984)

14. Guardian, 11/11/80

15. Guardian 11/11/80

16. Time Out 15/8/80

17. RUNNING May 1985 p102

18. Evening Standard, 12/10/84

19. Guardian 5/12/84

20. Guardian 29/1/85

21. Alan Pascoe, Sunday Times 3/2/85

22. Sunday Times 3/2/85

23. RUNNING Sept 1985 p19

24. RUNNING Sept 1985 p19

25. RUNNING Nov 85 p32

26. Guardian 10/1/85

27. Guardian 11/2/86

28. Sunday Times 21/7/85

29. Guardian 1/11/85

30. RUNNING Dec 85 p12

31. RUNNING Dec 85 p38

32. Sunday Times, 22/9/85

33. Times 24/10/85

34. Guardian 2/2/85

35. Guardian 8/2/85

36. RUNNING July 1985 p6

37. RUNNING Jan 1986 p13

38. RUNNING Dec 85 p12

39. RUNNING April 1986 p6. APA dispute these charges and point to the costs of the various services they provide to their clients - see RUNNING May 1986 p49

40. RUNNING April 1986 p6

41. RUNNING May 86 p49

42. Guardian 5/10/85

43. RUNNING Jan 1986

44. Guardian 15/2/85

45. Guardian 7/2/86

46. RUNNING Jan 1986 p5

47. RUNNING July 85 p21

48. RUNNING Dec 85 p11

49. G.Whannel, Fields in Vision: Sport and Representation, in Screen, Vol 25 N 3 May-June 1984

50. Jean Marie-Brohm, Sport A Prison of Measured Time, (Ink-Links 1976)

51. see J. Hargreaves (ed) Sport Culture and Ideology (RKP 1982) for further discussion.

52. E. Cashmore, Black Sportsmen, (RKP 1982)

53. RUNNING April 1985 p11

54. RUNNING July 85 p55

55. Star 4/1/85

56. RUNNING April 85 p59

57. Times 24/7/85

58. RUNNING Sep 85 p7

59. Daily Mail 24/7/85

60. Guardian 25/7/85

61. RUNNING Nov 1985 p6

62. Guardian 20/7/85

GLOSSARY

AAA: Amateur Athletic Association

APA: Alan Pascoe Associates

BAAB: British Amateur Athletics Board

BAPU: British Athletics Promotion Unit

IAAF: International Amateur Athletic Association

IAC: International Athletes Club

IMG: International Management Group

ISL: International Sport and Leisure

ITCA: Independent Television Companies Association

LWT: London Weekend Television

SCAAA: Southern Counties Amateur Athletic Association

TSB: Trustee Savings Bank

WAAA: Womens Amateur Athletics Association